

THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEWER: JACKIE EGAN^A

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SIDE ONE

JE: I'm going to start off asking you -- I guess you said your grandparents came -- if you want to talk about how your grandparents came --

CB: Well, my grandparents came from Naples, on my mother's side -- they both came -- and they brought their -- how many children did they come with? Two, a boy and a girl. That would be my oldest aunt and uncle. Then they had -- I think there were seven all together, after that. My mother was the youngest. I'm not really sure, but I think they lived on Grand Street when they first came here. I don't remember what-and-Grand, but they lived on Grand Street. Then my grandfather bought a house on Park Avenue, 628 Park Avenue, where the whole family lived.

[Interruption] -- aunt and uncle [?] -- family, and after

my mother got married, then she moved over, and we lived on the top floor. I think I was born -- and I was there. Then there was my brother and my sister. I have a younger sister and a brother.

The next house was 626, and my aunt bought that. That was the oldest one, who came from Italy. So she owned that, and there was more family in there. Oh, it was family, family, family. The yards were combined --

JE: So the two houses contained your whole --

CB: -- the whole family. You could go right through the yard -- it was great. We had parties and birthdays and, oh, gosh, it was wonderful.

JE: What year did your grandparents come here?

CB: It must have been -- hmmm -- well, in the 1800s. They had to come to Ellis Island, I think. Because my mother was born in 1909, here. So they came -- yes. Yes. It was quite a long --

Now my father -- his mother was only a baby when she came from England. I think they lived on -- I'm pretty sure it was Eighth and Park. Yes. But then they moved up to Tenth and Park.

JE: Everybody was on Park.

CB: Yes. And I've never moved. I'm still on Park. It's crazy. Yes, I know.

JE: So your father was born here, then, because your grandmother was --

CB: He was born here, yes, and there were three sisters he had, so that was -- Of course, they all scattered different places. They all moved.

JE: So when did your parents marry?

CB: They married in 1939.

JE: Do you know how they met?

CB: No. I never asked them. That's funny.
Yes, I know. I just realized, I never asked them. Well, too late now.

JE: So you were born on Park Street.

CB: Yes. Well, I was born in a hospital,
but I was with --

JE: Oh, what hospital was here?

CB: I was born in Jersey City. There was a private hospital there. Jeez, I can't remember the name of it. I think it might have been Garfield Something, but I don't think it's there anymore.

JE: Did we have a hospital in Hoboken?

CB: Oh, yes. There was St. Mary's -- but it didn't look the way it looks now. It was completely different. Nothing like it looks now.

JE: So what did your father do for a living?

CB: He worked in "Todd's" Shipyards, for a long, long time, especially during the war.

JE: And where was --

CB: That was all the way up on -- I know it was on 14th Street. I don't know if it was between Willow and Park or Willow and [?] -- but it's gone. He worked there a long, long time.

JE: So did he retire from there?

CB: No. Then they went -- I don't know if they went bankrupt or -- something happened. Then he worked for the school system. He was a custodian, in quite a few different schools here, like a head custodian.

JE: Did you say your mother was a homemaker?

CB: Oh, yes. She stayed home and took care of the kids. My mother didn't work, no.

JE: Good for her.

CB: Yes, they did that years ago. They stayed home and took care of the kids.

JE: Did you ever go to visit your dad at work?

CB: No, that was a shipyard. You couldn't. As a matter of fact, I still even have the card. You had to have an ID, with his picture and his fingerprints, and it was like from the government. Because he worked on ships. He was like a "checker," but he had to go in the ships -- which, unfortunately, had a lot of asbestos, which didn't do him good later on in life. Bad. Very bad. But you couldn't go, no.

But I used to wait for him. He used to take the bus home, the Willow bus, and I used to come down Willow. We used to wait for him, my sister and I; not my brother, he was too small. Then we used to come home. We used to wait for him to get off the bus. Because he worked so much during the war, and we were little then. So as we got older, we waited for him.

JE: You don't have to tell us your age, but
what --

CB: I'm not afraid to tell you my age.

JE: When were you born, then?

CB: I was born in 1941. I'm sixty-two and I
feel great.

JE: And you look great.

CB: You're only as young as you feel. I
keep active.

JE: Now were you still living, at this
time, in the house you grew up in?

CB: Yes. We still lived there. Then we
moved from there -- it was sold. My grandfather had died,
then my aunt -- the family didn't want it, so we moved only
a couple of doors down, to 622 Park Avenue. As I said, I
can't seem to get away from Park Avenue. I'm still on Park.

JE: That's great.

I'm sorry. I'm going to send you back a little bit. What was it like -- you grew up in a very Italian household.

CB: Oh, yes. Yes.

JE: Lots of family and lots of --

CB: Lots of cousins, lots of family. Lots of kids.

JE: And neighbors, too.

CB: Oh, yes. On the whole block, everybody knew everybody. It was very close, that block. Everybody knew everybody. It was fun. It was fun. It was nice.

JE: Was it pretty much an Italian neighborhood, or an Italian block?

CB: Yes, there were a lot of Italians on the block. There still are some. Not as many as there used to be, but there still are some.

JE: Some that you actually know, from -- ?

CB: No. Unfortunately, everybody I knew is gone from there. They either passed away or they moved.

JE: So where did you go to school in Hoboken?

CB: Our Lady of Grace.

JE: And where was -- ?

CB: Lady of Grace is right where the park is, the church. That's the Lady of Grace -- which they don't have anymore. It was a sad thing.

JE: That's at Willow and Fifth?

CB: Fourth. It's at Fourth.

JE: Oh, that's the whole block.

CB: The whole block is the church, yes.

JE: That was Our Lady of Grace up until recently, though, wasn't it?

CB: I think it was a year or two ago they got rid of it. Very sad, that day. They sold everything, they got rid of a lot of stuff. The church, of course, is still there, but the school is rented out. I don't know. I really don't know what's going on. I know they had bingo in there. That I know -- which is funny.

JE: Now was that from grade school through high school?

CB: No, they didn't have a high school. They just had a grade school, like up to twelve -- twelfth grade, then that was it. So that was fun. And that block has changed completely. Across the street, diagonally, there used to be Stevens Academy. It had belonged to Stevens, and it was ~~an old~~ ^{little} school, very expensive at that time. Now it would probably be nothing. Where the church towers are now, that used to be a pencil factory.

JE: Really?

CB: It took up the whole block. Of course, it was all knocked down. That's when they built -- They knocked a lot of homes down just to build the church towers. There were a lot of homes there, a lot of fish markets. That would have been on Clinton. It was a pencil factory.

JE: So when did they build the church towers? Do you have any idea?

CB: Oh, it's more than twenty years. It's got to be. I think they did it after I got out of that school. Yes. So that's a long time ago. That's a pretty old building now, but it's been there a long time -- more than twenty years, I think. Even thirty. Could be.

JE: So the Stevens Academy was where --

CB: It used to be a bank. It was really very exclusive. The kids were very -- you know.

JE: I imagine Hoboken at that time being very working class.

CB: Oh, yes, very working class, in the shipyards.

JE: Where did these snooty kids come from?

CB: They were the ones who lived up on ^{Castle} Hudson Street, on "~~Case~~" Point Terrace.

JE: Oh. So that was pretty exclusive up there?

CB: Oh, you had to have money to live up there. Then it was like -- probably now it would be nothing to live up there. Now you can't even live up there, because those homes are just gorgeous up there. A lot of it was from the school, from the Stevens [?] -- the college. If it wasn't for Stevens, I don't know what Hoboken would be like. Because they just built that new school, the Hudson School, on the corner of -- Well, I remember what it looked like when it was there, when the kids went to school there.

JE: Where is that school at?

CB: That's on the corner of Sixth and Park. They built it the same, what it looks like, they tried -- they did a good job. But I remember when we used to go -- well, they blocked the stairs off with fences, and we used to just be able to go around. We used to run up the stairs and run down. It was funny. It was funny.

JE: So there was another -- there was a private school up there?

CB: That was a private school.

JE: So there were a couple private schools.

CB: That was Stevens -- I don't know if it was a daughter ^{in-law} and it was named after her -- Martha Institute it was called. It was a nice school.

JE: And how was it different from -- did different kinds of kids go to the Martha Stevens School, vs. the one that was where the bank was?

CB: Well, I think it was like the same. I'm going back a real long time ago. Then they closed it down.

I think it was just empty. They didn't use it for a long time after that. They had "flea markets" inside, after that. They had a lot of "flea markets" in it. Then they just had to knock it down, it was really starting to get deteriorated. But they built it as a really beautiful-looking building now. It's the same. So it looks good. We're happy that it's back. Especially with the stairs going up, it makes it look so nice on that block.

JE: I know we're jumping around here, but what about -- Now you told me you remember where all the piers were.

CB: Yes -- when the ships used to come in. Right. That's where, now, they have all those beautiful buildings they just built on -- is that River Street?

JE: The ones right here, on Fourth or Fifth?

CB: Is it Fourth? Or maybe is it Third? Going down Third, to go all the way down Third, Second and First, I think -- There was nothing but the piers up there, Pier A and Pier B. My cousin worked there. I had two

cousins who worked there. That was a very busy place up there, with ships coming in. It was a lot of work. That's why there was a lot of people living here at the time, like a lot of Italians and Irish and Germans. There were a lot of Germans, too. Before they built that, where they had the parking -- that was all buildings up there. They were all homes. When they decided to build they bought them out, and there was a lot of bars, tons of bars. I mean, really not very nice. I wouldn't go in them.

JE: More so than now?

CB: Oh, yes. Oh, no, they were like -- they weren't nice places. They were for the longshoremen. My father named a few. I can't remember them now, but he used to remember them. I don't know. But they're all gone. There's nothing up there now. They weren't nice places. They were the [?] -- and that's it.

longshoremen's

JE: As kids and stuff, you wouldn't go down to the --

CB: Oh, no. Well, once. Yes, my cousin did take us down when we were young, to one of the ships -- I

Rottinham (sp?) - says "Rotterdam" later
inside

think it was the ~~Rotterdam~~. We went ~~and saw it~~. It was just so beautiful. We went with a guy who was making desserts, and we got desserts. It was wonderful. It was wonderful, just to go there.

JE: It was like a big cruise ship.

CB: I think it was a cruise ship. It had to be the Rotterdam. That was the name of it, yes. So that was fun. Oh, my God, that was a long time ago. So the only piers left are the ones in Elizabeth. That's it. Because my cousin went there after they closed up, which was sad. And it was empty for so long. It was empty for years and years. It was getting really bad up there, the rotten piers. Then when they started knocking everything down, I said, "Well, I hope they build something, because that looks terrible." It's so beautiful now, though. Have you been up there?

JE: Yes.

CB: It's so beautiful. It's gorgeous.

JE: So that was during the '70s -- because I know Hoboken went into this kind of decline.

CB: No, maybe it was the '60s. When they started to build the condos, was it the '70s? I'm trying to remember. I think it was. Yes. All of a sudden condos were being built around here, and they were trying to get all the people out. It was bad. It got to be really bad, putting people out. They had to stop that now. You can't do that anymore.

JE: Yes, I heard about that.

CB: A lot of fires.

JE: They would light fires, right?

CB: Very suspicious, but we're not going to say anything about that. But they were kind of bad at one time. It got bad here. Now, of course, you're not allowed to do that. You just can't put someone out because you're building a condo. You can give them three years -- because where I'm living now, they're building condos but I'm still there.

JE: Nice.

CB: You can't do it. You have to have --
there's laws now, thank God.

JE: I know you were young, but do you
remember during the wartime, when all the solders would
come and ship out from here?

CB: No, I was a little too young to
remember that. That I don't remember. A little too young
for that.

JE: I always hear Mafia stories about
Hoboken. Do you know anything about that?

CB: Well, I don't know -- maybe yes, maybe
no. There was always a lot of clubs and things going on, a
lot of things like that. I really don't know what was going
on. I didn't pay too much attention to that when I was
young, I guess. Maybe there was. I don't know. There could
be, possibly. I know a lot of people used to take numbers.
My grandfather did. He used to take numbers. I don't know.
My grandfather even made his own wine.

JE: At the house?

CB: Yes, because he had a shed in the back. He used to make his own wine. Also, he used to keep, for the holidays -- he used to get watermelon and keep it wrapped up in something, and you had it for Christmas. I wouldn't go bad. I don't know how he did it.

JE: Really?

CB: I don't know how he did it. I don't know what he did. We weren't allowed in the gardens. He used to holler at all the kids not to go in his flowers. It was funny. That part I do remember.

JE: Now I guess Hoboken's changed quite a bit.

CB: Sometimes I don't know if it's changed for the better or worse. I don't know. I know every time I pass something, it's gone. I'll say, "What happened to that store?" Or there was a parking lot, and now they're making condos -- which they'll probably make on that corner where

they tore the bank down, I told you. The library is still there. Thank God the library's still there.

JE: Is that where it's always been?

CB: It's always been the same. Beautiful.

JE: Wow.

CB: Yes, it's always been the same. I always liked to go in there, because it's old and so pretty. There's not much old stuff left.

JE: Yes, I guess when you were mentioning Stevens, I think some of the fraternity houses --

CB: Well, some of the homes are still just the way -- they're beautiful. And then the brownstones are really in very -- they're still the same, because they left all the woodwork and the shutters in the windows, which are just beautiful. But as far as the condos, they just keep building them. I don't think it's ever going to end.

JE: It's crowded in Hoboken now, but it was probably crowded back then, too.

CB: I don't think so. Not as much. It's more crowded now. I think there are more people coming. More young people living here, because it's close to New York. They say it's cheaper. I don't know about being cheaper to live here, but they say it is, and it's close to Wall Street, where everybody works. Most people work on Wall Street that I know. And it's so easy -- you've got the bus, you've got the ferry, now that the PATH has opened up -- so there's a lot more people. The avenues and the stores are fairly crowded. As a matter of fact, I just did laundry this morning, which I never do on Saturday, and it was mobbed. I couldn't get a machine. You have to go early to everyplace, to get things done.

JE: I'll bet there weren't cars on your street, right?

CB: Well, no, not like now, when you can't find a parking space. It's terrible. As a matter of fact, on that block where I did live, on Sixth Streets, across the street was a big, big parking lot, humongous, where

there's homes there now. On the corner, going toward Seventh (I'm still on Park) the telephone company had a building there. It just took up a little bit of it, and went around the corner, on the side street. Then, of course, they knocked all that down and they built these homes there, two-family homes, on that block, like they are, together. There's a lot. There's quite a few of them, maybe six or seven. As a matter of fact I even watched them -- we lived across the street and watched them build them.

So a lot of things have changed, yes.

JE: Well, some of the delis are still around, from the olden time --

Flori

CB: Well, yes. He's still down there -- Who else is still alive?

Policastrós

JE: How about the "bread" people, like "Castros," and -- ?

Marie's

CB: Yes, well, "~~Bere~~'s" Bread is still here, and "~~Joms~~." "~~Joms~~" is on Grant^d Street, on Fourth and Grant^d. Yes, I think it is Fourth. No, maybe it's not Fourth, maybe it's Fifth. He's on Grant^d Street, that's all

I know, because I've passed it. Yes. He's still here. And there's the "antique" bakery, Marie's. There's, of course, the bakery -- Carlos is still -- that used to be next to [?] cakes. We got all our cakes there, for weddings and baby showers and --

JE: They were across from [?] --

CB: Well, they weren't there. They used to be downtown, I don't exactly know where. I can't remember. But they weren't always up there. Because that was "Shillings," a different name.

Shoenings (sp?)

JE: Across from City Hall?

*(sp?)
shoenings
shoenings (sp?)*

CB: Yes. It used to be "Shillings" Bakery, but Carlos took it over. They moved up there from downtown, I don't exactly know where. They were pretty far down. I know when my sister got married she got her cake there. We got her cake for her bridal shower and the baby shower. Everybody used to get their cakes from there. Because they made, oh, God, delicious cakes -- which I still love.

JE: Oh, that's funny.

CB: But as I say, there's no more stores that used to be up there. There were so many stores up there. We even had a "Lofts" up there at one time. It used to be right across from McDonald's. It's a little store now. I think it's a grocery store. They sell fruit and stuff. It used to be "Loft's."

JE: What was [?] --

CB: "Loft's" is candy. It was candy. It was nice to go ^{to} there. We had so many different stores, like the five-and-ten. ^{is gone} There was another store called "Guys," ^{Geismers} where they sold men's clothes.

JE: Oh, yes, I've seen that [?] --

CB: I think ^{Quick} "Coat Check" is gone. ^{Quick} "Coat Check" is gone too, now, I heard. There was another dress store (I bought quite a few things in there) -- "Wiener's." That's gone. It was all on the avenue.

JE: These were all like Mom and Pop stores?

CB: ¹⁰¹ That was a very nice store. They sold nice clothes in Wiener's -- coats. I bought quite a few things up there. They had good stuff. And all those little stores were up there. It was fun. But they're all gone. We even had a Singer's, where -- what's that chicken store that's on the corner?

JE: Boston Market?

CB: Yes. Singer's used to be on there, the sewing-machine place.

JE: Oh, the sewing-machine place. Wow.

CB: The only old stores, across the street, that would be on Fourth maybe -- yes -- is a flag store. That's been there forever. As far as I can remember, that ^{flag} store has been there, and Barron's has been there, as a drugstore. That's been there forever, too.

JE: Where's that at?

CB: Same block.

JE: On Washington?

CB: Yes. It's going down beyond that.
side
That's ~~all right~~. It's right by the Blockbuster.

JE: Yes. They're selling medical supplies.

CB: Yes. That's been there forever.

JE: Oh, and I guess "Schnackenberg" --

CB: Oh, that's the only one that's left.
There were so many places we used to go. I didn't go there too much, because that was too far up. But that's been there forever, too. I used to go to, when I was young, it was called "Abel's," and it was on Seventh and Washington. Now I think it's a dentist's. It was an ice cream -- we used to go in. Everything was so cheap. You could have a coke for, what was it? A dime. They had a jukebox. Then the other one was down further, where East "L.A." is, and that was called -- oh, my God -- "Umlin's?" Was that the name of it? I think it was "Umlin's." I have to think. "Umlin's" I think it was.

JE: Another ice-cream place?

CB: Yes -- where you could go in and eat. I think they had food in there, though. Yes, yes. And then down further, on the other side of the street -- that would have been on, let me see, maybe Third, a place called Jeannette's. I don't know exactly what's in there anymore. I can't remember. I'm trying to remember what was in there. It was another little ice-cream parlor, very small, catered to young people at that time -- I'd say '50s-'60s, when I was young. And we had movie theatres here, too. A lot of them.

JE: Really? Was the one downtown always a movie theatre, or no?

CB: Downtown?

JE: There's one by the PATH.

CB: Oh, that's new. That's a brand-new one.

JE: Where were the movie theatres?

CB: Well, the movie theatres were all on the avenue -- that would have been Sixth and Washington -- it was called the U.S. Theatre. Yes, the U.S. It was where the banks are now. I used to go there all the time. Then down where CVS is, that was called the "Fabian." There was another one in the middle of the street, but I cannot remember the name of that. I never went in that place. I don't know why. I don't know the name. There were a lot -- I wouldn't say movie theatres, but my father would tell me there was a lot of old, where they used to put shows on, like reviews. One, he said it was the Gaiety -- I don't know where it was -- and there was another one someplace. Oh, God, what was it? There were a lot of them, he said, at one time, where they used to put on shows. It was a good thing he told me these things, I wouldn't know them.

JE: Did you walk everywhere? Or what was --

CB: Oh, there was the Washington Street bus, just like the bus now. Or walk. I never walked too far. I don't think we were allowed to go too far away, until we got a little older. Walking. Of course, we had the PATH. But the old trains, that had like the [?] -- seats. That ~~was~~ so nice, when we used to go in. ^{smelled}

JE: What were they?

CB: It was the older trains they had there,
not what they have now.

JE: You mean on the PATH trains?

CB: Yes. They had the smell of the old --
straw seat
they had like a [*^*] -- They smelled good. And, of course,
they were not air-conditioned. And the ferry was running
then. They had stopped it, but it was running, then they
stopped it, now it's running again. But they did have it
then, too.

JE: Did you actually take the ferry into
the city?

CB: No, no. I was too young. By that time
they probably had stopped it. Then they started it up
again, which is good.

JE: But you took the PATH train.

CB: I was on the PATH train when they had the old ones, yes. It was nice. They smelled nice. I always liked the smell of them. But no air-conditioning, like I said.

JE: I think of Hoboken as being pretty safe, for being such a densely populated, urban area.

CB: Oh, it was very, very safe.

JE: It was always safe?

CB: When I was growing up. Like, now you would not leave your children out alone to play, because you're afraid. Somebody could come along and snatch them. Years ago that did not -- We always stayed on the block, but you weren't afraid to leave your kids outside. No. You were not afraid to leave your kids outside. Nobody was going to come along and grab them.

JE: Right. But you were just supposed to stay on your block.

CB: Yes. But you could go back and forth, on the whole block, as long as you didn't leave the block. I mean, don't go around the corner or anything like that. Although I did get lost once, and my aunt bought me a bracelet with my name and address on it, so I wouldn't -- that was funny -- which I still have.

JE: How did you get back home?

CB: I don't remember. I don't even remember being lost.

JE: That's why you had that bracelet.

CB: That's why I had that bracelet.

JE: That's funny.

You mentioned the pencil factory. Did you know about the Tootsie Roll factory?

CB: Oh, yes. That's still there. That's all the way up on, is it 14th Street?

JE: Oh, that's not the Lipton Tea building?

CB: No. Lipton Tea was on -- Oh, gosh. I don't know where that was. That was on 14th Street, but it was down -- It would have been between "Garden and Bloomfield" Something. Then, of course, there was also Maxwell House. Of course, you know Maxwell House was here. The building is still here. And there was Hostess, Hostess Cupcakes. The building is still there, though. That was on the Park side between Park -- no, we'd come up -- Park and it must have been Garden. Yes. Park and Garden. What else was up there? Bethlehem Steel was up there, too. That's not up there anymore. U.S. "Testing" was up there, too -- if you've ever heard of U.S. "Testing. U.S. Testing" was right on Park, on, it must have been, 14th Street, past that. Now it's a garage.

JE: A lot of industry.

CB: A lot. Then there was -- oh, gosh, let me think. There was another building -- now it's called the clock tower" building. It was a lot of places that made things. I just can't remember the name of the places that they made things on certain buildings. The buildings are there, they just renovated them and made apartments. They

mostly made apartments, not condos at that time. They made leather stuff in one of them. I don't remember the name of the buildings.

JE: Oh, yes. I'll bet you -- "Observer" Highway had industry, too, I think.

CB: Yes. They still have some things going. They make coats. There were a lot of factories that made coats. There were tons of them. Those places were converted into condos, because my cousin worked in one of them. They made coats, or sweaters -- oh, they made tons of stuff. There's not that many around anymore. Unfortunately, there's not that many. A few.

JE: Now did you work in any -- ? Where did you work?

CB: No, not here. I worked in New York, but not here.

JE: Oh, you worked in the city?

CB: Yes.

JE: Did you take the PATH or the bus?

CB: Yes. That's how I know the smell.

JE: Oh, that's how you know the smell.

CB: Until they got those new cars in. But the air-conditioning was nice.

JE: Where did you work in the city?

CB: I worked downtown, where Wall Street is. Down that way. Yes.

JE: Did the PATH always go down there?

CB: Yes. It always went down there.

JE: So it always went down there.

CB: Yes. But that was before they built the World Trade Center. Way before that. Way before that.

JE: What was the stop called? Downtown? Or Wall Street?

CB: Gee. I don't remember. I don't remember. I really don't remember what it was. I don't know. There must have been some stop, but I just don't remember what it was.

JE: Now do you have any friends from growing up here?

CB: Oh, yes. Not relatives, not too many. I have one cousin who lives here, but everybody else is either passed away or moved away. I have [?] -- so I have a friend, yes.

*friends
that still
live here*

JE: [?] -- grew up with you, or -- ?

CB: No. "I told [?] --" what I was going to do, and she said, "Oh, my gosh. What could you remember?" I said, "Well, I'm going to try." Because we laugh about it, that we're both getting up in years.

JE: I think it's great.

Now what was fun here, to do in the summer?

After school?

CB: Well, we had a back yard, so we used to go -- the whole family used to go and bring all this food. It was called South Beach. It was on Staten Island. We used to go there a lot, and bring all the food. I never liked it, because I always got sand in the food. And I'm not a beach person now. I think that's what turned me off it. But we always went there.

JE: Was this like a day trip?

CB: Yes.

JE: Did you drive over?

CB: Yes. We used to drive. Two cars, we used to have to take, because --

JE: -- it was a big family.

CB: Yes. A big family. But we spent a lot of time in the back yard. And my father used to take us to the parks.

JE: Were the parks here, like -- ?

CB: Oh, yes. But we always used to go to the one on 10th Street, on -- now what would that be? Between Clinton and [?] ^{Grand} -- There's a park up there. There's another park. My grandmother didn't live too far away from there, on 10th and Park, so we used to go up there. As a matter of fact, they had a beautiful -- it's not there now -- you used to go down a couple of steps and there was a big water and they had fish in there, at one time. Now, of course, they've closed it all in. It was really lovely.

Well, we used to go out of town, too. My father used to -- what's the park? Oh, I can't remember it. We used to take a bus. Oh, I can't remember. It was in Union City? No, no. North Bergen, maybe. Because we used to go up that way. I can't remember the name of the park, but we used to go up there, too.

But you made your own fun, you know, because it was different than it is now, the kids. It's different. You know, roller skating --

JE: Right. You could do that?

CB: Yes. Without getting damaged. A bike.

JE: It was probably a lot easier, without all the congestion.

CB: Yes. Well, there weren't as many people. Like I said, roller skating. They had a roller rink once here, too, and that was -- St. Ann's Church had it. I don't think they have it anymore, but it was --

JE: You mean on Hudson? Or that's going back, right? That's going back.

CB: Yes. They had a roller rink there, in the back of the church. It was a building -- I don't think it's there anymore, but we used to go, and that was fun. And, oh, I spent a lot of time in Palisade Park, which is no longer here. That was just [?] --

JE: Right. Was the "St. Ann" Festival going on all that time?

CB: Oh, yes. I always went -- That I remember. She used to pass our block all the time, always passed Park Avenue. I always remember that. That's been going on for ages. I don't know what year they're in now -- seventy-something; seventy-six, seventy-seven. I don't know. That I remember.

JE: Did you guys go to church on Sundays?

CB: Oh, yes. You had to go to church on Sunday, are you kidding?

JE: Which church?

CB: Our Lady of Grace. Yes. Because you had to go with your class. When you went to school, you had to go. So 9:00 Mass, you had to go.

JE: Every day?

CB: Every Sunday.

JE: Oh, really? You had to go with your class on Sunday?

CB: Oh, yes. Yes. Oh, yes. They were very strict about that. But we don't go anymore.

JE: Well, I went to Catholic school, but we didn't have to go on Sunday, with our class.

CB: Oh, yes, we had to.

JE: But you went during the week, on the holy days?

CB: Oh, yes. We had to go. Oh, definitely. If you went to the school, it was mandatory. I was christened there, too -- baptized, communion, confirmation, graduating from school. So everything, yes. Everything was done in the church. My sister was even married in the church.

JE: Your sister was married here, too?

CB: Yes.

JE: Did she marry someone from Hoboken?

CB: Yes, yes. They went to school together.

JE: Now you said Our Lady of Grace did not go up to twelfth grade?

CB: Yes. It stopped at twelve.

JE: They've renovated this church, though, within the last --

CB: Yes, they did. [?] -- there was some damage. Inside, it looks ^{a little bit} better. Yes. It's a big aisle to walk down, especially if somebody's getting married, let me tell you.

outside, they did a beautiful job

JE: Did you have to --

CB: My sister got married at that church. It's a long walk. It's a long walk. As a matter of fact,

there were two weddings I went to at that church, that I had to walk down that aisle.

JE: Wow. That is a big church.

CB: It is a big church, yes. And a lot of funerals, too, but we won't go into that part. Yes.

JE: Yes. Our Lady of Grace.

But you still like it here, right? You're still here.

CB: Oh, yes.

JE: So this is home, I guess.

CB: Oh, yes. I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to stay here. I'll probably just die here.

JE: But your sister moved, right?

CB: Oh, yes, my sister -- Well, when my sister got married she moved to Lyndhurst, with an

apartment. Then she got her own house in River Edge, and now she lives in Las Vegas --

JE: Good for her.

CB: -- which is nice. I go and visit.

JE: And you have a brother?

CB: Well, my brother passed away.

JE: Was he here in Hoboken?

CB: Yes. Then he went in the service. He was living all over the place.

JE: Oh, wow. So when did Hoboken start -- I know you said you don't know whether it's changed for the better or the worse. But when did you notice this big change? Was this something from the -- ?

CB: It started when they started building the condos. It must have been in the '70s -- late '70s,

early '80s, something like that. I noticed a big change. Everything was happening. All these people were coming in.

JE: Were you aware when all the artists started moving -- because -- ?

CB: Oh, yes. You knew they were coming in. They had those big lofts they were living in, I don't know where. Downtown someplace, I don't know. They still have them, I think, the lofts.

JE: This is great. Is there anything I didn't ask you about?

CB: No, I think that's about, really, everything I can remember.

JE: That's great.

CB: There are a lot of other things that go on, but I can't remember. I just remember certain things, you know -- stores, and people who used to be here who are no longer, gone. We used to go into delis that were around

the block but they're all gone; butchers that are all gone. They're all gone.

JE: I didn't ask you about Frank Sinatra. Are you a Frank Sinatra fan?

CB: Yes. Yes. As a matter of fact, talking about -- I almost forgot. Where I'm living now, Sinatra did live in my house, at 703 Park Avenue. He lived on what would have been three flights up. I guess, coming up, it would have been on the left. That's what I've heard. I don't know if it's true. They lived downtown, then they lived there, then they moved to Garden Street, I think.

JE: Actually, one of the things you mentioned on that tape --

CB: On the tape, yes.

JE: You mentioned about living -- I guess there was like a demarcation line where --

CB: If you lived downtown, that was lower class. If you started to move uptown, you were getting better. Yes. That's what they said, years ago.

JE: Hudson Street was special, or something?

CB: Oh, Hudson Street was rich people. I had a cousin, my father's cousin -- his uncle lived up there. He had the money.

JE: But was that north of, like, the shipyards -- I would imagine --

CB: Well, there was Hudson, then there was River Street, and then you had -- that was it, yes. But that was a very exclusive -- especially going uptown, more, like, I'd say, from -- Let me think now, where the beautiful homes are. They start, I think, it could be Ninth, going up. As you go up higher -- then, of course, there's the Castle Point Terrace. That's a very, very, very expensive place to live now. By the by, there's a park up there, too. [?] -- park.

JE: So it was an "uptown/downtown" thing,
it wasn't like east --

CB: Well, the Italians all lived downtown.
They lived on, like, "^{Grand}Grange" Street. Let me see --
"^{Grand}Grange" Street, Madison, Jefferson, [?] -- they all
lived down there, but it was nice down there. Then it got
not so nice, when they started to move --

JE: So you wanted to move up.

CB: Oh, yes, you wanted to move up. The more
you moved up, the better it was for you. You'd get a little
better --

JE: Interesting.

CB: They'd say your money was getting
better. I don't know how true that was.

JE: What about politics in town? Were you
ever following the politics?

CB: Not really. I remember all the names we'd hear -- Mr. Grogan. Let's see, who else? Oh, my goodness. Grogan. Who was after Grogan? I can't remember. There were so many. There were so many, I just --

JE: And how about for hobbies? Were you into going out and listening to bands?

CB: They didn't have that then. Not here. Not what they had down in the park. You mean the music in the park? No, they didn't have that there. And all the movies. They didn't have that up -- where they have now. No, they didn't have that then. Not that I remember. Maybe they did when my parents -- but they might have stopped it. But I don't remember that at all.

JE: And what about -- I know you mentioned the different ethnic groups that used to live here.

CB: A lot of Italians were here. A lot of Italians. Irish, some Irish. There were Germans, but then the Germans sort of left and are gone. Then the Puerto Ricans, and now they're not as many, either. Now we have more, I think, Indians coming in now. It's different. But

the Italians are still here. I don't think they'll ever leave. Even if they do, when the St. Ann's Feast comes, they come back. They come back for that feast, because it's a big thing.

JE: Great.

CB: So I think that's all I can remember. I can't think of anything else. I'm glad my memory's good.